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S E C R E T PARIS 005528

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [FR](#) [TU](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY PARIS RESPONSE TO ACTION REQUEST ON  
TURKEY'S EU ACCESSION

REF: A. STATE 150087

[B](#). PARIS 5471

[C](#). PARIS 5350

[D](#). PARIS 5307

[E](#). ANKARA 4619

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Post refers Washington to refs B, C and D for its current analysis of French views and intentions with respect to the beginning of EU accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3. We continue to believe that PM de Villepin's statement on recognition of Cyprus was motivated primarily by domestic political considerations. At the same time, we believe the French threat to block the beginning of accession negotiations must be taken seriously. The studied ambiguity of Villepin's and others' statements suggests that much will depend on the eventual line-up of views within the EU. Given current tensions between France and the UK in the wake of the May 29 French referendum on the EU constitutional treaty, and the UK's delicate role as EU Presidency, we judge that London's influence is extremely limited. The role of the EU's two most interested partners -- Greece and Cyprus -- could be crucial.

[1](#)2. (S) For what it is worth, we share the UK Deputy Head of Mission's analysis (ref E) that the French may intend to use Villepin's statements as a bargaining chip to seek broader language on the open-endedness of Turkey's accession process. For domestic purposes, an indefinite delay in the opening of accession negotiations through new preconditions would be the ideal outcome. In practice, the GOF may be willing to settle for broadening the negotiation mandate over an outright delay. This could include a demand that the Turks state early-on their intention to recognize Cyprus, as stated in the French non-paper circulated in the Greek press. France may also hope tactically that a broadening of the negotiation mandate will force the Turks themselves to react in a manner that could delay the opening of talks (see also ref D). This would allow France to argue that it is respecting its previous engagements while shifting the onus to Turkey.

[1](#)3. (C) We repeat that, based on our soundings to date, the French position has not yet been fully determined. Our sense is that our contacts are working on the basis of defending PM de Villepin's and President Chirac's statements rather than an articulated policy. That policy will likely be defined by Villepin personally in coordination with Chirac, which suggests that France will initially take a very hard line at the August 24 COREPER meeting and at the September 1-2 Gymnich meeting, and then draw final conclusions.

[1](#)4. (C) Our British Embassy contacts plan to hold their own round of consultations with French officials over the next couple of days. We have set up a meeting for August 18 to discuss their assessment of the situation.  
Hofmann